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V. Economic Life

Sources of Food

Agriculture

The foundation of Tanala economic life is agriculture and the natives cannot conceive of existence without it. During the seasons of planting and harvest all other activities are suspended. Tanala who have entered the employ of Europeans will always specify that they must receive leave at these times to return to their villages to attend to their rice, and will do so even when it entails a considerable financial loss. Every able-bodied member of the tribe takes part in the work and even kings do not consider it beneath their dignity to work on their own plantations. 291 (292)

The account of Ikongo agriculture given by Sadaro Antoine is of such interest that it seems best to quote it in full. He says: "Our crops are rice, maize, manioc, beans, bananas, sweets and *kabanda* (two varieties of ground nut) and many sorts of greens, cucumbers, sugarcane, oranges, etc.

"The growing of rice is our principal culture and it is the foundation of our food. Our ancestors knew only six varieties: very late, very hairless, silvery, very sensitive, hexadonly and unlucky. Rice is cultivated twice a year, the first crop being called *vary aloka* and the second *vary aferu*. The Ikongo have three sorts of land: 1. *Tany* [newly cleared forest]. 2. *Hanka* [swampy land]. 3. *Hony* [terraced and irrigated land]. The *vary aloka* is sown in the *hanka* or *hony* in the month *Miaka* [July] and harvested in the month *Asaramanoy* [November]. The *vary aferu* is sown in the *tany* in *Asaramanoy* [November] and harvested in Volamiva [April]. 293 [31] [32]

"This is how the *tany* is made: The weather is fine, the sun bright. It commences to be hot. The *endrinj* and *fameira* are in flower, seeds sprout, and the shoots of the *amonta*, *adambora* and *mandroa* begin to open. The birds *fintsena*, *vorompo* and *alily* sing from the trees. These are the signs foretelling the *fakowa* [time for cutting the *tany*]. [illegible] with thick forest. They halt at the *origo* of the forest and divide the land to make the *tany*. Each one sets up a mark on his part, the weapons away. Satisfied with the division they return to the village loaded with faggots. The next morning all go to work. Everything, trees, bushes and vines, is cut down. After two or three days of individual work the men begin to help each other (in cutting down

567 persons born into servitude, but there was no strict rule. A docile servant who served his master well would come to be considered a family slave, while a born slave who was lazy or troublesome would be degraded to chattel slavery. Chattel slaves simply represented so much wealth and labor power and could be sold at will. Family slaves, on the other hand, were united to their owners by ties of affection and were very rarely sold. The master could sell them, but such an act would be reprehended by the entire village. Families which had been slaves for three or four generations acquired a certain status in the village. They were permitted to own property, had their own home, and would only be sold if guilty of some crime. A slave family of this sort would be attached to some lineage and its economic status would differ little from that of a free family. After the Menabe came [546] under the domination of the Imerina empire, free persons were occasionally enslaved for debt, but this was always rare and the slavery was light. The individual was considered as a pledge rather than a slave, for his lineage would make every possible effort to ransom him. A slave who had been ransomed by his relatives at once regained his social position.

546 Good slaves were often freed by their master and would then attach themselves to his family as clients. These, their descendants, 553 and the offspring of certain marriages between slave and free formed a class of free slaves who were socially intermediate between the slaves and the hova. Individuals of this class might rise to wealth and importance in the community, but they were debarred from holding office and from burial in the village tomb.

546 During the reign of Andrianampoinimerina, founder of the Imerina empire, a third class came into existence among the Menabe. The Zafiakotry gens, which had been defeated by its neighbors, tendered voluntary submission to him. He helped it to conquer several of the other gentes and recognized it as the ruling gens for this division of the Tanala. All the Zafiakotry then assumed the rank of andrianas, i.e. nobles, while their chief became a king. Although [547] the assumption of andriana rank brought with it social prestige, most of the Zafiakotry continued to live in their own gens territory and to cultivate their own land, etc. The conquered gentes recognized the authority of the Zafiakotry chief, but they paid no tribute to the Zafiakotry gens, nor were they displaced from their land.

The Tanala Ikongo were also divided into three classes, called hova, olombe and olovo. These corresponded to the andriana, hova, and olovo classes of the Menabe. All that has been said of

I: Linton B-9 (1926-27) 1932 FT8 Tanala FT8

VII. GOVERNMENT

In describing Tanala government it is necessary to treat the Menabe and Ikongo divisions separately. Until about one hundred years ago the Menabe had no political or governmental unit larger than the gens. Later, with the aid of the Imerina empire, the Zafiakotry gens succeeded in bringing several of the other gentes under its domination and a kingdom was established. This kingdom tried to copy the organization of the Imerina kingdom, but it never became well integrated or thoroughly organized. The Ikongo, on the other hand, had kingdoms of long standing and had developed a stable system of government with officials of varying rank. 631

The Menabe

Among the Menabe each village was practically autonomous. The authority of the chief of the gens was recognized, but he never interfered in village affairs and was only appealed to in disputes between villages or in serious criminal cases. Each village had a chief, the *Andriambavy*, who was elected informally and could be deposed at will. There were no ceremonies of investiture and he had no special insignia. He was considered simply the first among equals. To be eligible for the office a man had to be personally popular, rich, generous, a good diplomat, a good warrior and a good orator. The *Andriambavy* had no authority over the persons or property of the other villagers. His duties were to advise and help them, to act as arbitrator in minor disputes, if brought to him voluntarily, to organize and coordinate communal activities, seeing that labor and expense were equitably divided, and to act as representative for his village in its dealings with other villages or with the chief of the gens. The office carried no salary or perquisites, beyond personal exemption from labor. Under French control the office of *Andriambavy* has been retained and its powers and its responsibilities considerably increased. He must provide the quotas of men demanded by the government for forced labor and cannot be deposed by the village without government consent. Bribes to the *Andriambavy* are now common. 618 643 622 [117]

The affairs of the village were controlled by a group of important men, comparable to the "key men" of American communities. The position was unofficial and the natives seem to have had no generic term for such leaders. They are now referred to by the French word 623

1: Linton B-6 (1926-27? 1933 FYS Tanala FYS

to become hereditary, the eldest of a deceased chief's sons being chosen to succeed him. The *Anakandriana* usually held office for life, but could be deposed for misconduct. 618

The *Anakandriana* was in no sense a king and his establishment differed little from that of other well to do natives. He seems to have had no special insignia of office and I could learn of no taboos governing his conduct or that of the other members of the gens in dealing with him. No taxes were paid to him. In some gentes he received a part of fines levied on criminals, but this was not universal. His duties were to act as arbitrator in disputes between villages and as a court of last appeal in serious criminal cases, especially those involving sentence of death. 618 693

After the Zafiakotry conquered the neighboring gentes their *Anakandriana* was recognized as a king, *Mpanaka*. At first he seems to have been chosen by the gens alone, like any other *Anakandriana*. Later he was chosen by the *Anakandriana* of all the gentes, the only prerequisite for office being that he must belong to the Zafiakotry gens. Still later the royal power was strengthened and it became possible for the king to nominate his successor. The king Rainilevola had children by eight of his wives and before his death indicated the succession for twelve places. Lemangivy, a son, was designated to succeed him, then Iovana, a daughter, then Rainibrianatsara, a son, and after him nine other sons. The mother of Rainibrianatsara was of slave caste, but his right to the succession was never questioned. During the reign of Queen Iovana he was the most influential man in the kingdom. He never became king because the French abolished the office. 643

I was unable to get any coherent account of the exact powers and functions of the Menabe kings, or of their regalia, or of the ceremonies performed when they were inducted into office. No two informants were in agreement on these points and apparently they had never become formalized. The kingdom was short lived and constantly subject to Imerina influences.

THE ISANDRO

The political organization of the Ikongo cannot be understood without some knowledge of their history. In the earliest period their territory was occupied by many politically independent gentes which were probably similar to those of the Menabe in their organization and government. Later at least two gentes of foreign origin forced their way into the region, partly displacing the aborigines. At first 174 663

the invaders lived in compact gentile groups, but in time certain families or lineages left the gens territory and settled among the aborigines, seizing control. These small ruling groups kept touch with their parent gens for a time and relied on it for support, but they intermarried with their subjects and fused with them racially and culturally. Their descendants in the male line came to constitute a noble caste with representatives in all the groups. Although these nobles claimed a common origin and were jealous of their social privileges they no longer considered themselves as a political unit. Although they would assist each other if the commoners rose against them, they frequently fought among themselves, leading their followers of aboriginal stock against each other. Even in such wars they still recognized the blood bond to the extent that it was taboo for a commoner to kill the enemy king, although a noble would do so without hesitation (see *Warfare*).

Apparently there were many Ihunga villages which did not include lineages of *hova* ("noble") caste. Even when they were present their influence was not preponderant in local affairs. The village government was essentially the same as the Menabe. There was an elected chief, usually not a noble, who acted as executive, and a *Fokonolona* ("council"). Each gens had a chief called the *Mpanaka* who was elected from the members of the *hova* caste. Prerequisites for the office were the same as for the Menabe *Anakandriana*. The *Mpanaka* was chosen by the village chiefs and *Notoles* of the entire gens, irrespective of caste, and could be deposed at will. Associated with him were one or more officials called *Anakandriana*, who were elected on the same basis and in the same way as the *Mpanaka*, but must be of *mahaka* ("common") caste. Theoretically the *Anakandriana* acted as counselors and executives, but actually they often seem to have had as much power as the *Mpanaka*, who was unable to remove them from office. The whole arrangement strongly suggested a dual chieftainship.

Kingdoms arose, as among the Menabe, through one gens acquiring dominion over others. The king, also called *Mpanaka*, was chosen from among the *hova* of the dominant group. Like the gens chiefs, he was assisted by elected *Anakandriana* whom he could not dismiss. These *Anakandriana* might be chosen from any gens within the kingdom, but were always of *mahaka* caste. Usually all gentes were represented among them and they formed a sort of permanent council with a sharp check on the conduct of the *Mpanaka*. They exercised executive functions and continued in office

1: Linton E-5 (1926-27) 1933 FYS Tanala FYS

from reign to reign. The most influential of the royal *Anakandriana* were called the *Anakandriambe*. 646

ELECTION OF THE KING

The following account of the election and investiture of an Ikongo king is quoted from the manuscript of Sadaro Antoine: "When a king had died the *Anakandriambe* summoned all the *Anakandriana* and *Notables* of the two castes in the kingdom to choose a new king. The *hovaleky* [nobles] assembled in one house and the *rakoeky* in another. The commoners deliberated as to who should be king and when they had decided went to the house where the nobles were assembled and designated for the office the one they liked best. This man was separated from his comrades and taken to a house in the corner of the village. There he stayed, rarely going out, until he was invested with office. A few days after the election the whole population constructed a large house, the *trano be*, or *lapa*, to be the royal residence. 643

"On a fortunate day selected by an *ombiasy*, everyone went to the village of the new *Mpanaka* to celebrate his solemn entry into the *lapa*. About noon all the *Notables* entered the house where the future king was. The *Anakandriambe* placed the *satro mena* [a red hat with a tassel] on his head, dressed him in an *akanjo joky* [a dark red garment like a long shirt or smock], a *lamba mena* [shoulder blanket of red silk], and *sombotrina lamba mena* [shawl of red silk]. They placed a silver necklace on his neck and a silver bracelet on his right wrist, and gave him a *tokin-kakafotsy* [long ebony staff encrusted with tin or silver] to carry. When everything was ready the king seated himself on his *filanzana* [carrying chair] which was usually the house door, and the *rakoeky* carried him to the royal house. They formed a procession with the chief *Anakandriambe* first, then the king's wife, on foot, then the king, followed by his escort of *Notables*, etc., and then the whole population, singing. They sounded *conch shell trumpets and fired guns. The young people sang and* danced to the *sodina* [flute] and *drums* [a variety of large drum]. A public fête was organized in the village. Before entering the royal dwelling the king, followed by the population, walked around the house three times. Each time he arrived opposite the east side of the house he halted and fired a shot in the air. The first shot was in honor of the king, the second in honor of the *Anakandriana*, and the third in honor of the people as a whole. If the first shot failed to go off, it was a bad sign for the king. He would have a misfortune 643 527 787

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643 527 787 or would not reign long. The *ombiasy* might change his destiny by bathing him with water containing magical materials, but he was sometimes dismissed hen and there and another king chosen.

643 527 782 "The king entered the house by the big door on the east, taking care to place his left foot on the door sill first. He seated himself on the eastern side of the house on a clean mat, his counselors on the right and his wife on the left. An ox was tied to the *fatora* with its head east. [The *fatora* was a painted post about six feet high, usually made of *tsiu* wood. It was set up east of the royal house to commemorate the ancestors.] The *Anakandriana* left the house. They threw water on the roof of the house and on the ox three times, while the chief *Anakandriambe* said 'Oh *Zanahary* of the east, the south, the north and the west, come assist at this ceremony. We have chosen one to direct us, to counsel us and to protect us. We offer you an ox *lena trafo* [lit. with a long hump, i.e., fat]. We ask your protection that our new king may live and reign long, that we may be protected from all dangers, that the army of the Imerina may not come to our region, that the wild pigs and locusts may not injure our plantations, that we may be exempt from all sickness, that our women may have many children and that our wealth may be increased.' After making this invocation the *Anakandriambe* entered the house and the young men of *hova* caste killed the ox and cut up the meat. Rice and pieces of the meat were cooked and placed on a leaf of the Traveler's Palm on a clean china plate. This was then put on a handsome mat before the east door of the house. Everyone then uncovered his head and stood silent. The *Anakandriambe* advanced and addressed the *razana* [ancestral spirits]. He invited all the ancestors of the king to take part in the repast. He explained why they had been called, then asked their protection, good fortune, and prosperity. When the prayer was finished a great quantity of rice and meat was cooked and the king offered *toaka* [sugar cane rum] to the *Anakandriana*, the singers and dancers. There was a great feast. There was a great uproar in the royal house, ending in shouts of laughter. The next day the king and his family gave two or three cattle to the people. These were killed [not sacrificed] and the meat distributed to everyone. The people then returned home talking of the incidents of the ceremony."

643 There seems to have been no formal procedure for deposing an undesirable king and it was extremely rare in practice. Kings were selected with great care and were watched and admonished by the

1: Linton E-5 (1926-27) 1933 FY8 Tanala FY8

Anakandriana. I was told that a deposed king would usually be killed to prevent later complications. 643

ROYAL POWERS AND FUNCTIONS

The king was supposed to stand in the same relation to his subjects as the father of a family to its members. In theory he had absolute power over their persons and property, but it was a power which he never dared to exercise arbitrarily. The Tanala kings never developed the elaborate palace organization which, in some other tribes, interposed a barrier between ruler and subject and made oppression safe and easy. A king who sold a subject into slavery or seized the property of even the poorest commoner would arouse a storm of protest. The whole community would feel that its rights were in danger and the offender was liable to be deposed or murdered. Bad kings occasionally mulcted rich subjects on trumped-up charges, but even in this they had to move with caution. In general the rule was benevolent and the duties attached to the royal office balanced its advantages. 643 661

A king was expected to aid and counsel his subjects, maintain order throughout the realm, lead his people in war, and above all administer justice. Stinginess was a severe reproach and in bad seasons the king was expected to help his subjects to the limits of his property. Any subject could apply to him for advice and he was also expected to hold *kabary* ("palavers") from time to time and counsel his people in formal fashion. One *kabary* was always held in the spring, before planting began, at which the king addressed his subjects and encouraged them to plant plenty of crops and cultivate them well. At another *kabary* he advised the gathering of forest products. He was also expected to protect and stimulate trade, especially with Europeans. 643

The maintenance of order was in the hands of the *Anakandriana* of the various gentes. Each gens was expected to keep down lawlessness and banditry within its territory and to surrender to the king any of its members who had been guilty of offenses against members of other gentes or the subjects of another king. Each *Anakandriana* was personally responsible to the king for the behavior of his followers and might, in extreme cases, be fined, although apparently he could not be deposed without the consent of his own people. 627 (615) (612)

The activities of the king as war leader have been described in the section on Warfare.

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mpandevina [assistants]. An ox is killed near the tomb and a great deal of rice cooked. Men, women and children follow the cortege to the tomb dancing and singing. After the interment the *mpandevina* take their meal in the open air, returning to the village afterward. To end the fête one or more oxen are killed and the meat distributed to all the assistants. The funeral ceremony is called *mandrara lasona*. A funeral without cattle killing is scorned by the people. 764

"On the day of a funeral, before the cortege leaves for the *kibory* [clan tomb] the chief of the *kibory* stands before the body and makes the following speech: 'Oh thou who art dead, today we are separated forever, not by our wish but by the will of *Zanahary*. We will carry thee to the tomb where thy ancestors rest. Remain there with them and do not return to bring evil into the house. If, however, thy death has been caused by sorcery, may thy ghost quickly slay the evil doer. Do good to us and drive away all diseases.' After the body has been placed in the tomb the chief of the *kibory* or his representative makes the following speech: 'Oh you who are in this house, listen to what I say. We are now sending you so-and-so [giving name], one whom *Zanahary* has taken from us. Receive him to rest with you. Do not let him wander everywhere. Do not scorn him, for he is one of the last little children of one from whom we are all descended.'

"In former times *Mpanaka* [kings] were usually interred secretly. When a king was ill no one except the members of his family could enter the house where he was. A post, *adiby*, was set up in front of his door as a prohibition to enter. If the king died he was buried secretly that night by the village chiefs and *Notables*. His wives, children and relatives were forbidden to weep or to wear any sign of mourning. If asked how the king was they must answer that he was *mafanjafana* [indisposed]. The reason for this was that the tribes were constantly at war and the king was the military leader. If the enemy learned the king was dead they would attack the leaderless tribe and almost certainly defeat it. After some months, during which the people had chosen a new king, guns were fired on the highest hill in the tribe's territory. This announced the death of the king. On learning the sad news everyone wept in the villages. As a sign of grief they unbraided their hair and wore it hanging loose, and dressed in old mats. All the people went to the king's village. There they feasted for several days during which cattle were killed and the meat distributed. The new king was placed in a special house and no one might approach him except the *Anakandriana* 766 643 [12]

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766 643 [village chiefs] and *Notables*. At the end of the fête the new king, accompanied by all the people, left his hiding to enter the *trano be*. There was a great feast, the rejoicing being kept up until morning. Before they returned to their homes the new king gave the people one or two oxen which were killed and the meat distributed.

"Certain kings requested before their death that they should not be buried secretly. In this case the people chose a new king quickly, always from the royal family. The new king was put in a house in a secluded part of the village until the funeral was over. After his election the body of the dead king was placed in the *trano be* surrounded by women of the noble caste. A man of the Antimanga gens lay down close to the body and did not leave it until it was placed in the coffin. The men went to the forest to make a *loka* [coffin]. When it was ready they brought it into the village at night, unknown to the inhabitants. The body was placed in it and hung up in the *trano be*. Next day, at cockcrow, conch shell trumpets were sounded and guns fired in the air to announce the king's death. All the people wept and hastened to the king's village. All bulls which had lived in the same time as the king were killed, the meat distributed among all the people and the fat burned in the *trano be*. [The first part of this passage is not clear. The writer may mean bulls born in the year of the king's ascension or bulls born on the king's birthday.] The neighboring tribes were invited and during fifteen or thirty days tribesmen and strangers alike did nothing but feast. The king's body decomposed in the coffin, which was taken down and emptied from time to time. Sometimes only the bones were left to take to the *fobory*. At the end of the fifteen or thirty days they buried the skeleton and the new king made his solemn entry into the *trano be*."

764 Shaw, who visited the Ibongo shortly after 1870, says: "They make no tombs but bury their dead in the forest with no other mark than a notched tree to keep the spot in remembrance. The carrying of the body to its last resting place is accompanied by yelling and screaming but I saw no ostentatious mourning and weeping, as with the Betsileo. At certain places on the road the body is placed on the ground and a series of games is commenced in which wrestling and spear exercise form an important part. Burying is called 'throwing away the corpse.'" (Shaw, George A., Notes on Ibongo and Its People, Antananarivo Annual, Vol. I, 1875, p. 69.) Grandidier also says: "The Ibongo do not erect any tombs; they inter their dead in the forest and are content with marking the place by the help of a notch

[113]